



**Studies in Sociology of Science**  
Vol. 6, No. 2, 2015, pp. 17-21  
DOI:10.3968/6273

ISSN 1923-0176 [Print]  
ISSN 1923-0184 [Online]  
www.cscanada.net  
www.cscanada.org

## Research on the Relation Between the Self-Leadership and Work Engagement of the Primary and Junior School Headmaster

YU Shaoping<sup>[a],[b],\*</sup>; XU Huachun<sup>[a],[b]</sup>; YOU Yongheng<sup>[a],[b]</sup>

<sup>[a]</sup>College of Teacher Education, Sichuan Normal University, Chengdu, China.

<sup>[b]</sup>Education and Research Center, Chengdu, China.

\*Corresponding author.

Received 10 January 2014; accepted 15 March 2015

Published online 26 April 2015

### Abstract

Know about the work engagement of the primary and middle school headmaster and its influence factors to provide a basis to improve it.

Use the self-leadership questionnaires and work engagement scales to conduct a questionnaire survey among 220 primary and middle school headmasters.

The self-leadership ability and work engagement of the primary and middle school headmaster are both above the average level; except that there is no significant correlation between self-award or self-punishment dimension and contribution or between self-award and concentration, there exist significant correlations between all the dimensions of self-leadership and those of work engagement of the primary and middle school headmaster; It is discovered with the multiple stepwise regression analysis that the prediction of the two factors goal setting and job inner award entered in the regression equation for work engagement reaches 16.6%.

A clear job objective, emphasis on the value of the job itself, neglect of the disappointing side in the job and to think about its positive meaning increase the self-leadership ability of the primary and middle school headmaster and finally improve his or her work engagement as well.

**Key words:** Self-Leadership; Work engagement; Primary and junior school headmaster

Yu, S. P., Xu, H. C., & You, Y. H. (2015). Research on the Relation Between the Self-Leadership and Work Engagement of the Primary and Junior School Headmaster. *Studies in Sociology of Science*, 6(2), 17-21. Available from: URL: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/sss/article/view/6273>  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/6273>

### INTRODUCTION

The famous educator Xingzhi Tao said,

It is easier said than did to be a headmaster. When put narrowly, he concerns the academic prospects of hundreds of thousands of students and when put extensively, he concerns the rise and fall of the nation and sciences. (Fang & Tao, 2005)

Therefore, the headmaster's work engagement influences not only his own career development, but also the future of the country. A survey was conducted in the investigation of the work engagement situation and its influence factors of the primary and middle school headmaster to provide a scientific basis to promote the primary and middle school headmaster's work engagement.

### 1. OBJECTS AND METHOD

#### 1.1 Object

The simple random sampling method was employed to sample 220 primary and middle school headmasters to conduct a questionnaire survey, with 214 valid questionnaires recovered, and the efficiency rate 97.3. Of all the headmasters, there are 9(4.2%) who are aged above 50, 106(49.5%) who are aged between 40 and 49, 83(38.8%) who are aged between 30 and 39, and

16(7.5%) who are aged below 30; 3(1.4%) with a Master's Degree or above, 169(79%) with a Bachelor's Degree, 40(18.7%) with a college diploma and 2(0.9%) with a technical secondary school certificate;

156(72.9%) who has been a headmaster for 1-5 years, 33(15.4%) for 5-10 years and 25(11.7%) for more than 10 years. For other distributions of the sample, see Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**The Sample Distribution**

	Gender		Nationality		School category		
	Male	Female	Han	Tibetan	Primary	Junior	Junior-senior elementary school
Number	172	42	158	56	88	102	24
Percentage (%)	80.4	19.6	73.8	26.1	41.1	47.7	11.2

## 1.2 Method

### 1.2.1 Self-Leadership Questionnaire (Liang, 2012)

The self-leadership questionnaire method used for the investigation was made by Hanzhong Liang in several research ways including the document analysis, interview, open-ended questionnaire and structuralized questionnaire survey. The qualitative and quantitative analysis shows that this questionnaire has favorable reliability and validity and accords with all the indicators of psychometrics, with the Cronbach alpha coefficient of each sub-scale between 0.650 and 0.748, and the Cronbach alpha coefficient of inner consistency of the total scale 0.893. The so called self-leadership is the self-influencing process where the inner award is used to get an individual motivated to achieve the result according to the guidance of the internal standard, driven by self-need on the basis of his or her accumulated experience in the practical activities (Zhao & Liang, 2011).

### 1.2.2 Scale of work engagement (Zhang & Gan, 2005)

This scale is the revised edition by the Chinese scholars Yiwen, Zhang, Yiqun Gan, of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) developed by Schaufeli, etc.. This scale has altogether 3 dimensions: energy(as: in the work I feel that I can burst into energy), devotion(as: I am enthusiastic about my job) and concentration (as: when working I would be oblivious of myself). The Cronbach alpha coefficient of each sub-scale is between 0.668 and 0.785, the inner homogeneity is favorable and the Cronbach alpha coefficient of the inner consistency in the total scale is 0.891. There exist correlation between each item and the total score of its corresponding dimension, with the level prominent and construct validity favorable. The work engagement is the agreement degree of his/her work psychology or the important degree of his/her work in his/her heart, which itself is an active experience and it embodies the high energy, strong sense of identity and concentration spirit (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

### 1.2.3 General Demography Data Questionnaire

Including the general demography data such as gender, age, nationality and so on.

## 1.3 Statistic Analysis

Implement the statistic analysis of the data using the software SPSS16.0, implement the variance analysis for the quantitative data group comparison and implement the Pearson correlation analysis of the correlation between the quantitative data. Implement the linear regression analysis to analyze the influence factors of the primary and middle school headmaster's work engagement in the countryside.

## 2. RESULT

### 2.1 Self-Leadership Situation of Primary and Middle School Headmasters and Its Variation Analysis

The total average score of the self-leadership of primary and middle school headmasters is in the range of  $3.58 \pm 0.44$ , with the score of self-award the lowest of all the dimensions and the score of self-conversation the highest and with the score of each dimension in the range of  $(3.25 \pm 0.76, 3.90 \pm 0.59)$ , which indicates that the self-leadership of primary and middle school headmasters is above the average level.

As can be seen from Chart 2 and 3, primary and middle school headmasters of different agendas differ prominently in self-leadership emotion regulation ( $P < 0.05$ ), with male headmasters much better than female ones; there exist a distinct difference between the Tibetan and Han primary and middle school headmasters in the work inner award ( $P < 0.05$ ), with the Han headmasters' higher than that of the Tibetan ones; the difference is sharp between primary and middle school headmasters of different ages in the self-award dimension ( $P < 0.05$ ). It is found after the comparison that the self-award of primary and middle school headmasters aged between 30 and 49 is obviously higher than that of young headmasters aged below 30 ( $P < 0.05$ ) and also than that of headmasters aged below 50 ( $P < 0.05$ ). There is no sharp difference in the self-leadership of primary and middle school headmasters concerning age, education level and titles.

**Table 2**  
**Analysis of Self-Leadership Differences of Primary and Middle School Headmasters in Gender and Nationality ( $\bar{x} \pm S$ )**

	Gender		<i>t</i>	Nationality		<i>t</i>
	Male (N=172)	Female (N=42)		Han (N=158)	Tibetan (N=56)	
Self-goal setting	3.86±5.23	3.68±0.61	1.747	3.87±0.55	3.71±0.53	1.838
Self-conversation	3.88±0.59	4.01±0.58	-1.313	3.90±0.60	3.90±0.57	-0.071
Self-award	3.20±0.76	3.45±0.75	-1.971	3.26±0.78	3.18±0.72	0.704
Self-punishment	3.24±0.77	3.32±0.92	-0.504	3.26±0.80	3.28±0.83	-0.199
Mental imagery of successful performance	3.54±0.60	3.43±0.75	0.886	3.50±0.65	3.57±0.59	-0.781
Work inner award	3.79±0.56	3.71±0.62	0.815	3.83±0.56	3.62±0.57	2.305*
Emotion regulation	3.55±0.54	3.33±0.65	2.052*	3.52±0.55	3.48±0.63	0.445
Self-leadership average score	3.58±0.43	3.56±0.48	0.253	3.59±0.43	3.54±0.47	0.683

Note. \*  $P < .05$  \*\* $P < .01$  \*\*\* $P < .001$  same as below; the calculation is on the basis of the total average score of each dimension (same as below).

**Table 3**  
**Analysis of Self-Leadership Differences of Primary and Middle School Headmasters in Age ( $\bar{x} \pm S$ )**

	Age				<i>F</i>
	Above 50(N=9)	40-49(N=106)	30-39(N=83)	Below 30(N=16)	
Self-goal setting	3.81±0.41	3.86±0.56	3.81±0.55	3.68±0.55	0.389
Self-conversation	3.70±0.45	3.87±0.63	3.94±0.56	4.04±0.53	0.632
Self-award	2.78±1.04	3.29±0.76	3.33±0.73	2.78±0.65	2.650*
Self-punishment	3.39±0.82	3.25±0.76	3.27±0.86	3.17±0.84	0.138
Mental imagery of successful performance	3.42±0.60	3.55±0.65	3.51±0.61	3.42±0.71	0.279
Work inner award	3.72±0.62	3.84±0.58	3.71±0.55	3.70±0.59	0.685
Emotion regulation	3.73±0.57	3.56±0.55	3.42±0.60	3.44±0.60	1.152
Self-leadership average score	3.51±0.32	3.61±0.47	3.57±0.43	3.46±0.30	0.449

## 2.2 Work Engagement Situation of Primary and Middle School Headmasters and Its Difference Analysis

The total average score of the work engagement situation of primary and middle school headmasters is in the range of  $4.39 \pm 0.65$ , with the score of vitality the highest of all the dimensions, concentration coming second and contribution relatively low, and with the score of each dimension in the range of ( $4.62 \pm 0.64$ ,  $4.17 \pm 0.78$ ), which

indicates that the work engagement of primary and middle school headmasters is at a relatively high level. Seen from Table 4, there exists a sharp difference between male and female headmasters in the contribution dimension concerning work engagement with male headmasters' obviously higher than that of female ones ( $P < 0.01$ ). There is no sharp difference in the work engagement of primary and middle school headmasters concerning nationality, age, education level and grades.

**Table 4**  
**Analysis of Work Engagement Differences of Primary and Middle School Headmasters in Gender ( $\bar{x} \pm S$ )**

	Gender		<i>t</i>
	Male(N=172)	Female(N=42)	
Vitality	4.64±0.64	4.58±0.66	0.530
Contribution	4.25±0.76	3.84±0.76	3.105**
Concentration	4.40±0.71	4.24±0.76	1.237
Total average score of work engagement	4.43±0.65	4.22±0.64	1.887

## 2.3 Correlation Analysis of the Self-Leadership and Work Engagement of Primary and Middle School Headmasters

The correlation analysis is implemented in the self-leadership and work engagement of primary and middle

school headmasters to figure out the influence factors of the work engagement of primary and middle school headmasters. Seen from Table 4, except that there is no significant correlation between self-award or self-punishment dimension and contribution or between

self-award and concentration, there exist significant correlations between all the dimensions of self-leadership

and those of work engagement of the primary and middle school headmaster ( $P < .05$ ).

**Table 5**  
**Correlation Analysis of the Self-Leadership and Work Engagement of Primary and Middle School Headmasters (Value  $r$ ,  $n=214$ )**

	Self-goal setting	Self-conversation	Self-award	Self-punishment	Mental imagery of successful performance	Work inner award	Emotion regulation
Vitality	0.416**	0.380**	0.188**	0.209**	0.257**	0.398**	0.313**
Contribution	0.311**	0.260**	0.105	0.115	0.214**	0.279**	0.272**
Concentration	0.323**	0.338**	0.110	0.170*	0.290**	0.329**	0.276**

## 2.4 Main Factors Impacting the Work Engagement of Primary and Middle School Headmasters

Seen from Table 6, in the process of the stepwise regression analysis, self-goal setting enters the regression equation Model 1, indicating that self-goal setting has the closest relation to work engagement and works inner

award comes second. The multiple correlation coefficient of the dependent variable in Model 2 and the two independent variable is 0.416, which shows that work engagement has a prominent linear relation with self-goal setting and work inner award and the prediction of the two factors goal setting and job inner award entered in the regression equation for work engagement reaches 16.6%.

**Table 6**  
**Regression Analysis of the Self-Leadership to Work Engagement of Primary and Middle School Headmasters (Stepwise Method,  $n=214$ )**

Model	Independent variable	Value $B$	Value Beta	Value $T$	Value $F$	Value $R$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
1	Self-goal setting	1.360	0.382	6.010	36.115	0.382	0.146	0.142
2	Work inner award	0.904	0.254	3.201	22.025	0.416	0.173	0.166
		0.714	0.209	2.631				

## DISCUSSION

The research results show that the score of self-award is the lowest of all the dimensions concerning the self-leadership of primary and middle school headmasters and self-conversation the highest, which implies that primary and middle school headmasters seldom use the approach of external awards to inspire themselves (like if something is well done, reward oneself with a wonderful dinner, etc.), but rather they use a more sophisticated way of self-conversation i.e. positive psychological hint (like once the objective is decided, encourage oneself with "I can do it") to improve their self-leadership.

Primary and middle school headmasters of different agendas differ prominently in self-leadership emotion regulation with male headmasters' obviously higher than that of female ones, which has statistical significance, probably because males are more rational than females and can control their emotions; there exist a distinct difference between the Tibetan and Han primary and middle school headmasters in the work inner award, with the Han headmasters' higher than that of the Tibetan ones. Through further interviews, it is found that the schools where the minority group headmasters are working are bilingual and have more boarding students, so they shoulder more responsibilities and are therefore given more pressure by themselves. The difference is sharp between primary and middle school headmasters of

different ages in the self-award dimension. It is found after the comparison that the self-award of primary and middle school headmasters aged between 30 and 49 is obviously higher than that of young headmasters aged below 30, which is probably because primary and middle school headmasters between 30 and 49 are bearing the weight of the main family responsibilities and organization expectations. Given all sorts of pressures, than the younger headmasters below 30, they are more willing to improve their self-leadership ability through external self-award, explaining why the self-award of primary and middle school headmasters aged between 30 and 49 higher is also obviously higher than that of the headmasters above 50, which is consistent with overseas scholars' previous studies (McIntosh, 1999). The reason may be that headmasters above 50 are more mature mentally and what they desire most in the work is self-realization, so they don't need more external self-award to improve their self-leadership.

There exists a sharp difference between male and female headmasters in the contribution dimension concerning work engagement with male headmasters' obviously higher than that of female ones, which maybe have something to do with gender roles. A person's energy is limited and female headmasters need to put more efforts in mothering than male ones, which make female headmasters' score of the contribution dimension at work slightly lower than that of male ones.

Except that there is no significant correlation between self-award or self-punishment dimension and contribution or between self-award and concentration, there exist significant correlations between all the dimensions of self-leadership and those of work engagement of the primary and middle school headmaster; it is discovered with the multiple stepwise regression analysis that the prediction of the two factors goal setting and job inner award entered in the regression equation for work engagement reaches 16.6%. The previous relevant research also shows that self-leadership influences attitude toward and satisfaction about work (Neck, 1993). It is clear that if primary and middle school headmasters have a clear and practical work objective, they will perform more vigorously in the practical work, have a strong spirit of devotion and concentrate on work. Meanwhile, the higher the work inner award degree is, the more vigorous, devoted and concentrated headmasters will be in their work. Therefore, a clear job objective, emphasis on the value of the job itself, neglect of the disappointing side in the job and to think about its positive meaning increase the self-leadership ability of the primary and middle school headmaster and finally improve his or her work engagement as well.

## REFERENCES

- Fang, M., & Tao, X. Z. (2005). *The whole headmaster* (p.60). China: Sichuan Education Press.
- Liang, H. Z. (2012). *Enterprise employees' self-leadership in the context of Chinese culture*. Kaifeng, China: Henan University.
- McIntosh, A. L. K. G. (1999). *Exploring the concept of self-leadership factors impacting self-leadership of Ohio Americorps members* (Doctor Dissertation). The Ohio State University.
- Neck, C. P. (1993). *Thought self-leadership: The impact of mental strategies training on employee cognitions, behaviors and emotions* (Doctor Dissertation). Arizona State University.
- Schaufeli, W. B., Salanova, M., & Gonzalez- Roma, V., et al. (2002). The measurement of engagement and burnout: a confirmatory analytic approach. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 3, 43- 92.
- Zhang, Y. W., & Gan, Y. Q. (2005). Utrecht revision of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). *China Clinical Psychology Magazine*, 13(3), 268-270 .
- Zhao, G. X., & Liang, H. Z. (2011). Review on the current situation of overseas self-leadership research. *Development of the Psychological Science*, 19(4), 589-598.